

**Medicine Bow-Routt & Thunder Basin  
Resource Advisory Committee Meeting  
July 28, 2011 – Laramie, WY**

**ATTENDEES:**

RAC Members

Duane Short (Albany County)  
Jerry Schmidt (Albany County)  
Jerry Paxton (Carbon County)  
Win Dermody (Routt County)  
Chuck Sawver (Albany County)  
John Rich (Jackson County)  
Arla Strasser (Carbon County)  
Linda Fleming (Carbon County)  
Barbara Vasquez (Jackson County)

Forest Service Employees

Rick Cooksey  
Phil Cruz  
Tammy Petersen  
Larry Sandoval  
Becky Romios  
Aaron Voos

Special Guests

Kai Turner (Rio Blanco County), Ken Coffin (White River NF), and Tony Mong (Wyoming Game & Fish)

**WELCOME:**

Letters and certificates from the Secretary of the US Department of Agriculture (Tom Vilsack) were presented by Phil Cruz to each RAC member. The Medicine Bow-Routt RAC is wrapping up and there is potential for this being the last official meeting. If interest remains, there is still an option to have a final monitoring trip upon completion of RAC projects.

*UPCOMING DEADLINES:*

September 30, 2011 – Projects must be submitted  
December 30, 2011 – Projects to fund must be selected  
September 2012 – Project money must be obligated.

**Question from Arla Strasser:** What if money is left over? Can more projects be solicited?

*Phil Cruz:* Yes. You can also choose to submit unused money to other county's unfunded projects. One really great option could be to fix some of the many washed out roads with left over monies. This may offer a quick solicitation for a last minute opportunity.

**STATUS OF PAST PROJECTS (Q&A WITH BUDGET OFFICER):**

*(Status Report and County Title II Funds handouts)*

**Question from John Rich:** Jackson County approved a Native Seed Collection project which was placed on hold because the Science teacher was moving. Where is that money (\$9,000), and can Jackson County re-evaluate where it goes?

*Barbara Vasquez:* She will examine the application and do further research to see if the school was the applicant or if the science teacher was. Volunteers would be collecting the seed and it will take time

to close the loop, so if this cannot be settled by the end of the meeting, Jackson County will settle it via email.

The Ninegar Creek Realignment project was awarded and is expected to begin this fall. The contracted amount came to \$8,610.00 instead of \$21,000, so that would leave \$12,390 to be returned to Jackson County to spend. Similarly, Albany County will be receiving \$2,000 back from the MBR Ditch Clearing project. There are a number of projects that are or will be in contract soon, so each county may have additional money to spend. If all money is allocated then there will be no additional projects accepted.

The Lake Creek Fish Passage Restoration project (Albany County) needed 5 culverts to be replaced and the funds will allow for a field survey/design and 2-3 culvert replacements. The applicant is still seeking partners with positive response from Wyoming Wildlife Trust, and the Wyoming Game & Fish.

The Buffalo Pass Road Improvement project (Routt County) is under way and should be completed next week. There will be numerous culverts replaced.

**Question from Barbara Vasquez:** How will the \$12,000 from Ninegar Creek come back to Jackson County?

*Tammy Petersen:* The accounting works similar to a cash fund account. The authority runs forward and money isn't correlated to the year but rather to what project it was tied to. Each county has a single bucket of money with multiple projects funded from each bucket.

**Question from Arla Strasser:** What does it mean when a job code has been established? Can money be spent on a study? Does NEPA have to be done on private lands?

*Tammy Petersen:* Assigning a job code symbolizes that the project has been through the budget shop and authority to use the code has been received. The next step is for the project to go to grants and contracts. Money cannot be spent on a study unless it is NEPA work. If a project requires NEPA it can be covered by federal money, but a study cannot.

*Phil Cruz:* Money can be spent on private land that borders BLM and Forest public land, but it has to have a significant benefit to federal land. Watershed and habitat improvement projects are often perfect examples. The Boykin Encampment River Restoration project is an example of that.

The Boykin Encampment River Restoration project (Carbon County) is underway. Some of the planning and design has been done. They have set aside \$10,000 for NEPA, but the NEPA doesn't have to be done by the FS. Arla will check into the NEPA being done by the Conservation District so the county could potentially have an additional \$10,000.

## **PUBLIC FORUM DISCUSSION:**

*(Rio Blanco County/White River National Forest-2011 Secure Rural Schools Title II Project Submissions handout)*

### Rio Blanco County/White River National Forest

Kai Turner (Rio Blanco County): Worked cooperatively with County Road and Bridge and the FS to figure out which roads in the county were priority roads that need attention. The collaborative effort has boosted their confidence in choosing and establishing priority roads.

Ken Coffin (White River National Forest): Provided the following details associated with each proposed project:

*South Fork Gravel Project (\$11,853):* The South Fork Road is a main access road to the south fork of the White River. There are a couple of spots where drainage is an issue and culverts need to be installed. Additionally, an irrigation culvert is causing problems and needs to be buried deeper. These changes would be relatively minor.

*Uranium Peak Gravel Project (\$28,428):* Another road project where the BLM, FS, and County have graveled a portion of the road but there is an additional mile needing to be graveled along with the installation of a culvert. Currently, the road is really rough and run off each spring causes eroding. Funding this project would finish the last section of road.

*Marvine Road Re-Alignment (\$45,707):* Another major access road to White River campgrounds and the Flat Top Wilderness. Along a section of the road is a sharp curve where vehicles pulling trailers struggle and could easily slip off the edge.

Safety is key with all road projects proposed and the work would be completed by the county road crews.

***Question from Jerry Paxton:*** Does NEPA need to be done for any of the projects?

*Ken Coffin:* The first two projects listed (S. Fork and Uranium Peak) would not need NEPA, but the Marvine Road Re-Alignment would need a Categorical Exclusion (CE). The CE would not be inhibiting to the project. The county commissioners have been supportive because the road provides major access to federal lands and it is a major safety concern. Marvine Road is heavily used for recreation and hunting.

*Lost Park-Williams Fork Weed Management Project (\$15,000) –* The Lost Park-Williams Fork area is right on the divide between the White River and Medicine Bow National Forest watersheds. The project would actually occur on the White River National Forest and it would limit infestation of noxious weeds (Yellow Toadflax, Canada Thistle, and Hound's Tongue). Currently, they are seeking other funding through the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation. Treatment of the weeds would be applied via horses. There could potentially be minimal effects to native forbes, but overall nothing severe. A licensed contractor will do the work.

*Big Beaver Trail Re-Location (\$10,200):* This project would relocate an existing motorized trail from the creek bottom. For obvious reasons, the Forest Service would like to re-locate the trail to the hillside. NEPA would be needed for this project, but it shouldn't delay implementation of the work. A contract dozer (4-6 width length) would do the majority of the work with FS crews touching up.

**Question Duane Short:** How many acres in the Weed Management project will be treated? Have any alternatives to chemical use on federal lands been researched? What would the duration of the project be? Has research been done to find the root of the problem and if not could extra monies be used to do so?

*Ken Coffin:* They will treat approximately 50-75 acres in a roadless area. No other alternatives have been looked at for this particular project, but the White River NF has looked at biological weed management in the past. However, the insects proved to not be very prolific and efforts were not as successful as chemical efforts have been. If the project was approved, a contract would be written up for 2-3 years of treatment.

*Kai Turner:* The County Weed and Pest has engaged in this effort and feel like if this population is controlled it would benefit the public lands in the long run. The culprit for spreading weeds is most likely a combo between wildlife/birds/cattle/recreationalists among many other factors.

***John Rich motioned to accept all 5 projects for a total of \$111,000 and up to \$113,000 if needed. Any unused funds would go towards NEPA costs. Win Dermody seconded the motion. Motion carried.***

#### Wyoming Game & Fish

Hunter and Elk Movements in Relation to Beetle Kill Management – Tony Mong

(See presentation attached)

#### **LUNCH**

#### **DISCUSSION OF NEW PROJECTS:**

Each County caucused to discuss new project funding and priorities.

#### **SELECTION OF NEW PROJECTS:**

Carbon County: Three projects were discussed. The Faerber Ranch Aspen Protection and Regeneration project was eliminated because the group did not feel like there was documentation showing that the private land owner was on board and there was no firm contact with partners for the project. Full funding of \$78,900 was recommended for the Nugget Creek Fish Passage project. They unanimously felt it was a strong project. Carbon County's balance will be reserved for the Wyoming Game & Fish project, pending changes to the description of the project to include an education emphasis. Arla Strasser found out that Mark Shirley of the SER Conservation District will be doing the NEPA for the Boykin Encampment River project, so the \$10,000 which had been reserved for NEPA will now be applied to the Game & Fish project for a total of \$56,000. Any additional money left over from travel will also be allocated to the Wyoming Game & Fish project with the understanding that the project will be an education opportunity for other agency biologists as well as public. A website may be created and

devoted to releasing publications to various agencies. The results may also be posted in a Wyoming Wildlife article, and findings will be included in hunter safety education courses. Tony Mong will follow up with additional funding and collaboration with the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation and Bow Hunters of Wyoming. Carbon County proposes to wait for the final draft of the Wyoming Game & Fish's project for review by the entire RAC before allocating funds, but to approve funding of the Nugget Creek Fish Passage project.

Jackson County: Both the Newcomb Creek Habitat Improvement and Teal Lake Campground Restoration and Beautification were accepted. Since the Newcomb Creek project was approved, it would take \$10,000 less to do the Teal Lake project. Therefore, Jackson County will be looking at new projects to fund before September 30<sup>th</sup>. The Native Seed Collection project is still under discussion with an explanation soon to follow. Jackson County recommends fully funding the Newcomb Creek project (\$9,700) and the Teal Lake project (\$10,500) with the caveat of soliciting further projects and making a contingency plan via either a telephone conference or at the next meeting.

Routt County: It is recommended that the Native Seed Collection & Increase project is funded for \$4,000 and the Buffalo Pass Road Culvert Installation for \$35,000. Members concurred that both were good community projects.

Albany County: The Wetland Restoration and Protection project was accepted and they recommend funding it for the \$19,000. That leaves \$10,101 to finish the Lake Creek Fish Passage project. This would be a continuation of the project and Phil noted that the RAC would only need a letter from the District Ranger requesting additional funding to help finish the project. The contingency would be based on what kind of partnership the FS could establish. Albany County encourages more efforts be placed on finding partners for the Lake Creek Passage project. The North Laramie Range Aspen Restoration project was not chosen because even if all of Albany County's funds were allocated, it wouldn't make a dent in the amount needed to complete the project.

***John Rich motioned to accept funding for all recommended projects by County***

*Carbon County-\$56,000 to Sierra Madre Elk project and \$78,900 to Nugget Creek Fish Passage*

*Jackson County-\$9,700 to Newcomb Creek and \$10,500 to Teal Lake*

*Routt County-\$35,000 to Buffalo Pass Road Culvert and \$4,000 to Native Seed Collection*

*Albany County-\$19,000 to Wetland Restoration and \$10,101 to Lake Creek Passage*

***Barbara Vasquez seconded the motion. Motion carried.***

John Rich: Please try to involve local contractors in order to carry the spirit of the Title II directive.

Win Dermody: Working with the RAC has been an enjoyable experience and was pleased with the friendliness, effort, and courteousness that has been shown.

**NEXT STEPS/FUTURE OF THE RAC:**

The Title II authority may be extended but the funding might be replaced with Forest Service dollars. Stay tuned.

**Next meeting scheduled for Sept 14 @ 10:00 in Saratoga.** Tentative meeting that may be covered via teleconferencing or email.

**Medicine Bow-Routt & Thunder Basin  
Resource Advisory Committee Follow-Up Meeting  
September 7, 2011 – Walden, CO**

**IN PERSON ATTENDEES (2:30 p.m.)**

RAC Members

Jerry Paxton (Carbon County)

John Rich (Jackson County)

Barbara Vasquez (Jackson County)

Forest Service Employees

Phil Cruz

Rick Cooksey

Aaron Voos

Mike Wright

**ADDITIONAL CONFERENCE CALL PARTICIPANTS (3 p.m.)**

Duane Short (Albany County)

Arla Strasser (Carbon County)

Linda Fleming (Carbon County)

Sonja Macys (Routt County)

\*This follow-up takes the place of previously planned Sept. 14 meeting.

**TOPICS COVERED**

- Discussion among in-person attendees prior to conference call surrounding how to use \$12,190 in returned funds for Jackson County. Recommendation to fund Ninegar Creek and Grizzly/Helena projects.
- Per federal guidelines, Jackson County informed the RAC of their proposals to use Title III funds. Documentation of Public Notice in the Jackson County Star was placed on file.
- To all....Update on Boykin Creek project status from Arla Strasser. The ranch has changed ownership and overall project funding has changed. Question posed as to whether or not the RAC should proceed with planned funding. No objections are voiced based on updated project funding as a whole.

- Phil Cruz confirms that NEPA requirements have been met for the Boykin Creek project, based on a letter on file from NRCS. \$10,000 returned to RAC funds will be used on the Sierra Madre Elk project, as discussed July 28.
- Aaron Voos reports that \$9,301 remains available for funding due to account balances and travel overage. Discussion by all regarding how to redistribute those funds. Recommendation is made to split and use on current projects which had not been fully funded in the past.
- **Barbara Vasquez motioned to distribute all remaining Title II funds as follows:**
  - \$8,000 to Grizzly-Helena Trail Approaches (Jackson County) (\$5,000 from returned funds,\$3,000 from Routt County account balance)
  - \$7,860 to Ninegar Creek Crossing (Jackson County) (\$7,190 from returned funds,\$670 from Jackson and Routt County account balances)
  - \$3,382 to Sierra Madre Elk project (Carbon County) (From Carbon County account balance, less Paxton travel)
  - \$1,749 to Lake Creek Fish Passage (Albany County) (From Albany County account balance)

*\*NOTE: Final numbers reflect bringing all county account balances to zero.*

**Duane Short seconded the motion. Motion carried with no objections.**

- Pending reauthorization from Congress of Title II funds, for the time being MBR RAC remains intact. Accounts will be brought to zero balance.
- Barbara Vasquez proposes that the Forest Service email out photos (before/after) to the RAC of as many of the funded projects as is reasonably possible. Driving directions to the project locations would also be appreciated. These recommendations were met with positive feedback by Jerry Paxton and others in attendance.
- Jerry Paxton adjourns and no additional meetings are scheduled.